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(2) AIRGRAM

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TO : Department of State

INFO: USCINCSO FOR POLAD, DOD, Amembassies MANAGUA, SAN JOSE, SAN SALVADOR, TEGUCIGALPA

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA DATE: May 18, 1968

SUBJECT: Weekly Internal Security Report: May 10-16, 1968

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE OCT 1993
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
MAY 21 1968

REF :

1. The most important news of the week came from the Army which reported 2 successful encounters. In one, on May 11, the Army surprised a group of guerrillas near La Union, Department of Zacapa, and reportedly killed 6 of them (although only 3 bodies are said to have been located). (See Guatemala 4605, 4634 [redacted]. The encounter was significant for two reasons. It was graphic confirmation of other reports that the guerrillas are in fact still active and are taking advantage of the relative calm, brought about by the hiatus in activity on the part of the clandestine elements of the security forces, to organize in rural areas. It was also important because it will help silence some of the disgruntled Army officers and others who viewed the March 28 command changes and the accompanying new GOG policy on anti-subversion tactics as an indication that the government was turning soft on Communism.

2. The other successful action took place on the South Coast where the Army with some 300-500 men reinforced by helicopters and cooperating with the local police are making a concentrated effort to wipe out a bandit gang called "Los Lobos" which has been robbing and murdering for months and has kept the local populace in a state of terror. On May 15 the Army Public Relations Office announced that 3 of the gang had been killed on May 13 in a clash with Army troops. The elimination of this band would have two desirable effects. First, it would go a long way toward stabilizing conditions on the South Coast. Second, it would enhance the government's and particularly the Army's prestige. One of the disquieting aspects of the Lobos case has been that it has served as a persistent reminder that there are still areas of the country where lawlessness is the rule, not the exception, and where the security forces, for whatever reason, have been shown to be almost incapable of

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maintaining order. Perhaps even more damaging have been reports that elements of the security forces themselves, specifically the Mobile Military Police, were in fact involved with the Lobos. (A group of campesinos from Nueva Concepcion came to the capital on May 4 and made this charge to the press asking that the President be informed.) If the Army could wipe the group out it would at once establish that it was capable of maintaining law and order and that it was not in any way an accomplice.

3. The police in the capital were not idle either, and on May 12 they captured two youths accused of belonging to a FAR guerrilla cell. There were also some acts of terrorism reported but they were spread around the country and did not seem to follow any particular pattern. The most important incident occurred when a band of machine-gun armed men stole some Q4,200 from a bank in the capital on May 14. [redacted] B1 E There was also one military policeman killed by three men shooting from car in the capital, another man shot by an armed band in the Department of San Marcos for what neighbors term "political reasons," and a bomb exploded at the offices of a meat company in the capital.

4. The government replaced the Chief of Judicial Police, Stuardo Garcia Gomez by Capt. Pablo Nuila Hub. Israel Morales Chinchilla took over from Gregorio Morales Flores in the number two slot.

5. Notwithstanding the relative calm and prevailing atmosphere of optimism about the internal security situation the State of Alert was extended an additional 30 days on May 16. [redacted] B-1 EC

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